

chambers had been completed. After hanging upside down for a minute or so it heaved itself into the air, the talons still stuck into the wall of the nest. At the first attempt it could not dislodge the nest from the base. But in the second attempt a nest was carried away in the talons of both the feet, deposited on the flat base of a leaf of the palm, inspected and abandoned. The unsuccessful third attempt with regard to snapping off the nest was strange in that the kite held two nests, one in each foot. How long the predator went on in this fashion is not known.

That such open-nest birds such as crows do not tolerate a pariah kite's presence is a common sight. The

kite is known to be a "menace to young chickens and ducklings in poultry runs" (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ali S. and Ripley, S.D. 1978). Could the observed habit be an acquired one? That the predator did not know the breeding cycle of the prey species, expecting eggs or nestlings in the nests at that stage of nest construction, is perhaps evidence that it is a habit developed recently in the bird, perhaps locally.

H. DANIEL WESLEY

A. RELTON

A. ALAGAPPA MOSES

June 15, 1989

11. CINEREOUS VULTURE *AEGYPIUS MONACHUS* (LINN.) IN PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA

Four species of vultures have so far been recorded in Kerala, namely the black or king vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*, the longbilled vulture *Gyps indicus*, the whitebacked or Bengal vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and the smaller white scavenger vulture *Neophron percnopterus*. A new and rare species has now been added to this list, namely the cinereous vulture *Aegypius monachus* (Linn.), also known as the Himalayan vulture. It is being reported for the first time from south India, the previous southernmost limit of the bird's winter wanderings being Madhya Pradesh.

The bird was first seen at Kanjirappara, at an altitude of just around 30 m, near Mallapuzhassery in Kozhenchery taluk of Pathanamthitta (9°3' to 9°30' N, 76°30' to 77°15' E), a hilly district of Kerala in the first week of December 1988. The local people were excited when they spotted it, because such large-sized birds had not been seen before in the area. They caught the somewhat exhausted bird and handed it over to the Forest Department and it was in turn gifted it to the Trivandrum Zoo.

The cinereous vulture is a large, uniformly black, or blackish brown, vulture with naked, light pinkish neck surrounded by a distinct blackish ruff. The head is partially naked and conspicuously broader than in other vultures. It has no fleshy wattles on the sides of the neck. In overhead flight its broader wings without whitish stripe and the slightly wedge-shaped tail distinguish it from the king vulture.

A rare and sparse winter visitor to Sind, north-west and north India (including Nepal), Kutch, north Gujarat and central India, it affects savannah and semi-desert country and avoids forest. Within our limits it breeds only in Baluchistan between c. 2400 and 3000 m elevation and in the Barail Range of North Cachar at c. 1800 m. The nesting season is apparently March and April, though eggs have been taken in Assam in January and May.

January 18, 1989.

R.S. SHREE KUMAR

12. GREYHEADED LAPWING *VANELLUS CINEREUS* (BLYTH) IN GOA

Gary Featherstone of Doncaster (U.K.), an experienced ornithologist on a three-week visit to Goa, informed me on 2 January 1989 about the presence of two greyheaded lapwings *Vanellus cinereus* (Blyth) a few hundred metres behind the Hotel Ronil where he was staying, at Calangute Beach, Bardez, North Goa (15°32'N, 73°53'E). In the evening of the same day, we went together to the site and indeed found a single specimen of this species in a small dry sandy marsh that is periodically inundated by saline water when the adjacent Baga creek rises during spring tides.

The bird was immediately distinguishable from the not dissimilar yellowwattled lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*, a quite common species in Goa (though not in this locality) by the following features: its more sub-

stantial size, absence of the black crown, the lack of fleshy 'wattles' on the less extensive bare yellow skin of the forehead and the far greater expanse of white in the wing when in flight. No pectoral band was observed, suggesting that the bird was an immature. We were able to watch the bird clearly with 10 x 40 binoculars.

The greyheaded lapwing is known as a winter visitor to the north-eastern states of India, straggling as far south as the Andaman islands and as far west as Bharatpur, Rajasthan (27°13'N, 77°32'E) (Grubb, R.B. *JBNHS* 65: 484), making this sighting the first record of the species from the Indian peninsula and c. 1300 km distant from the closest previous record.

March 31, 1989

HEINZ LAINER